

The Together Trust Fostering Service

The Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 1JE

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency is owned and managed by a registered charity. The charity also provides education services and owns and manages several residential care homes.

The agency registered with Ofsted in 2003.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2017.

At the time of this inspection, there were 20 fostering households.

The agency provides short-term, long-term and respite placements for children.

Inspection date: 12 May 2026

Date of previous inspection: 1 December 2025

This monitoring visit

The purpose of the monitoring visit was to review the actions taken by the provider to meet the compliance notices served on 19 March 2026. The notices were served under Regulation 11, the duty to secure welfare, and Regulation 8, the registered person general requirements.

Leaders and managers have updated their safeguarding policies and procedures to reflect legislation and guidance. They have undertaken work with staff and foster carers, reflecting on the needs of the children they are caring for and how to keep them safe. They have continued to work with an external consultant to provide training for staff and foster carers, ensuring that new processes are fully embedded across the agency.

The revised standards of care policy provides clear and comprehensive guidance on the expectations placed on foster carers and the actions to be taken when these expectations are not met. The manager and staff have identified concerns, and there

is evidence that these are being addressed promptly. Records show that difficult but necessary conversations have taken place with carers and that concerns have been appropriately escalated to the placing authorities in line with safeguarding procedures. Referrals to the local authority designated officer have been made appropriately, ensuring that safeguarding processes are followed and that external oversight is in place.

Leaders and managers hold weekly team meetings that focus on improving staff practice and strengthen staff understanding of their roles and responsibilities. These are child focused and encourage staff to be professionally curious in their work. There are plans in place to provide reflective learning from case reviews to further embed safeguarding practice.

The manager has ensured that they notify the regulator of all serious safeguarding incidents, as required in the regulations.

The manager has robust systems in place to monitor safeguarding practices and the care provided by staff and foster carers. Their oversight includes evaluation, which is strengthened by external consultant support. This enables the manager to promptly identify any patterns of concern, provide clear guidance on what action to take and ensure that children are safe and receiving the support they need.

Following this monitoring visit, a case review was held on 15 May 2026, where it was agreed that the compliance notices have been met. Other requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection were not considered as part of the monitoring visit and have, therefore, been restated.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service. (Regulation 19 (a)(b)) Specifically, the registered person must have a clear understanding of the regulations and standards that govern the service. Additionally, the registered person must ensure that the agency decision-maker is a qualified social worker with a minimum of 3 years' post-qualifying experience in childcare social work and has knowledge of childcare law and practice. This requirement is restated.	25 June 2026
The registered person must maintain a system for— improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. (Regulation 35 (1)(b)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that opportunities to learn are taken at the earliest possible time to ensure that children are kept as safe as possible, as quickly as possible. This requirement is restated.	25 June 2026
The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which— is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b))	25 June 2026

Specifically, the registered person must ensure that foster carers and staff know what to do if an allegation is made and that allegation policies are consistently followed. The fostering service must ensure that the required actions are immediately taken in any relevant situation of which it is aware. Foster carers and staff must have clear guidance about how carers will be supported during an investigation into an allegation.	
This requirement is restated.	
The registered person must ensure that foster carers and staff know and follow policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding children, behaviour management, and children who are missing from home. Additionally, the registered person must ensure that foster carers act in accordance with the agency's statement of purpose and children's guide. If foster carers do not follow agency policies, this must be challenged and revisited. (Regulation 17 (2))	25 June 2026
This requirement is restated.	
The registered person must ensure that all relevant information about foster carers' practice is provided within the carers' annual review, to enable robust oversight and decision-making about their suitability to continue fostering. (Regulation 28 (1) (3)(a))	25 June 2026
This requirement is restated.	
The registered person must ensure that all relevant information is provided to panel, including comprehensive information about concerns relating to the practice of foster carers. (Regulation 25 (3))	25 June 2026
This requirement is restated.	

Recommendations

- The registered person should take effective action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which are raised with them. When concerns are not rectified in a timely manner, the registered person should provide appropriate challenge and escalate the concern further. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 25.8)

- The registered person should ensure that staff in the fostering service are professionally curious to ensure that children are safeguarded both in the fostering household and in the community. Meetings should have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work and ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 21.8)
- The registered person should ensure that reviews of foster carers' approval are sufficiently thorough to allow the fostering service to properly satisfy itself about its carers' ongoing suitability to foster. Specifically, the registered person must ensure that those chairing foster carer reviews are provided with all information relevant to the review to provide robust and independent oversight. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.8)
- The registered person should ensure that managers, staff and foster carers write about children in a way that is non-stigmatising, distinguishes between fact and opinion and does not apportion blame to children. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 26.5)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and take action when needed. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 26.2)
- The registered person should ensure that when reaching a decision or making a qualifying determination, the decision-maker considers *Hofstetter v LB Barnet and IRM* [2009] EWHC 328 (Admin), in which the court set out guidance for the way in which an adoption agency decision-maker should approach a case, whether it is a decision based on the agency panel's recommendation or the independent review panel's recommendation. This applies equally to fostering decision-makers. The court said that it would be good discipline and appropriate for the decision-maker to:
 - list the material taken into account in reaching the decision;
 - identify key arguments;
 - consider whether they agree with the process and approach of the relevant panel(s) and are satisfied as to its fairness and that the panel(s) has properly addressed the arguments;
 - consider whether any additional information now available to them that was not before the panel has an impact on its reasons or recommendation;
 - identify the reasons given for the relevant recommendation that they do or do not wish to adopt; and
 - state (a) the adopted reasons by cross reference or otherwise and (b) any further reasons for their decision. (The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services, paragraph 5.40)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC031288

Registered provider: Together Trust

Registered provider address: Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 1JE

Responsible individual: Ian Uttridge

Registered manager: Lisa Grundy

Inspectors

Sarah Probert, Social Care Inspector
Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector

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